

*Focus is on U.S. Citizens and Non-Citizens Whose Families Are Being*

*Split By Deportations*

March 31, 2011

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**(Washington, DC)** – Today, at a Capitol Hill press conference, Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL-4) was joined by families, community advocates, religious leaders, and other Members of Congress to announce the kick off of the *Campaign for American Children and Families*. The tour will lift up the stories of families and individuals "whose lives are being turned upside down by deportation," Rep. Gutierrez said, and will focus on U.S. citizens with immigrant parents or spouses whose families are being split apart. Almost 400,000 people are deported each year, a record number, and approximately four million U.S. citizen children have at least one parent who could be deported under current law.

At the press conference, three individuals shared stories which are typical of the stories that the tour will highlight. They spoke about what they and their families face every day. Anngie, a high school student from Maryland who was born in Guatemala, is an excellent student who has worked hard in school but faces an uncertain future because legislation that could have given her legal status, the DREAM Act, failed to garner 60 votes in the U.S. Senate last year. Maria, holding her daughter who is a U.S. citizen, told the story of how, after calling the police because of a domestic dispute with her husband, she ended up getting booked and turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement and put into deportation proceedings because of a program that enlists state and local law enforcement in identifying immigrants for deportation. Finally, Roberto Aguirre, a U.S. citizen from the Chicago area who said he voted for President Obama, introduced his wife and two children. Dolores, the wife, and one of their children, are currently fighting deportation despite the citizenship of the other members of the family.

Eva Millona, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition in Boston read a statement on behalf of the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) and the Change Takes Courage campaign, which is working with the Congressman on his tour. The families at the event were introduced by Emma Lozano, Co-Pastor of Chicago's Lincoln United Methodist Church and President of Familias Latinas Unidas/Sin Fronteras.

Tour stops will typically include a large church gathering with the testimony of these families, students who would have been eligible for the DREAM Act had it pass in December, and others caught in the unprecedented number of deportations currently taking place. The tour, which will stop in at least twenty cities and will begin with events in Providence, Rhode Island on Saturday (April 2) and Boston, Massachusetts on Sunday (April 3), will continue throughout at least April and May.

Representatives Mike Honda (D-CA), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Keith Ellison (D-MN) and Judy Chu (D-CA) also spoke at the press conference.

The following is the text of the prepared remarks delivered by Rep. Gutierrez:

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**Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (IL-4)**

**Remarks (as prepared) at Press Conference to Launch the**

***Campaign for American Children and Families***

**March 31, 2011**

**Cannon House Office Building**

REP. GUTIERREZ: I want to thank those who are stepping forward today and those who will be stepping forward over the next several weeks to tell their stories. The national tour we are kicking off today -- the Campaign for American Children and Families -- is a response to a crisis. Across the country, families are being ripped apart by deportations and detention. For the four

million U.S. citizen children with an undocumented parent, the fear of deportation for a family member is a daily reality.

Do you remember the little girl, Daisy, right here in the Washington, D.C.-area who got a chance to ask the First Lady a question when Mrs. Obama visited her elementary school last fall? She was 7 or 8 years old and said, in almost a whisper, that she heard that Mr. Obama was coming to take her mommy and daddy away because they didn't "have papers" and asked Mrs. Obama if it was true.

Daisy was born here, a U.S. citizen just like me, my kids, and my grandson, but Daisy's sister and her parents were born in another country and could probably never get a visa to come here legally or would have to wait years or decades before a visa came through. Her parents left the sister behind with family because they were seeking a better life and to work at jobs they indeed found in this country and Daisy was born here.

Now, every day when Daisy goes to school, her government, the U.S. government, in the nation of her birth and citizenship, goes to work every day trying to figure out ways to break up Daisy's family and deport her parents.

Just this week, a 4 year-old U.S. citizen named Emily was reunited with her parents in the United States after she was detained at a U.S. port of entry and in effect, deported to Guatemala. Her government, the U.S. government, put her on a plane to another country.

Our message is simple: A broad set of immigration reforms is absolutely necessary to fix our broken immigration system in the long run, but in the meantime we must ensure we do not needlessly deport the parents and spouses of U.S. citizens and others who are here working, raising families and contributing to our nation and economic recovery.

The DREAM Act received majority support in both the House and Senate last year but still is not the law of the land and approximately one million young people who were raised and educated in this country face the risk of deportation every day.

They, like every undocumented immigrant, are a busted tail-light away from deportation. They are a right-turn-on-red in a no right-turn-on-red zone away from being entered into the system and turned over to ICE for deportation as we are seeing with the expansion of programs like 287g and the so-called Secure Communities.

So we are going to go out around the country and tell their stories. At each stop -- and we have twenty lined up so far and there are more in the planning stages-- at each stop we will feature the stories of those whose lives are being turned upside down by deportation. We will hear from the U.S. citizen spouses and children of those who are disappearing and those who still live in a precarious limbo because of the inaction in Washington.

We are also making a very direct plea to the President of the United States. He has a number of avenues available to him under existing law with which he can instruct the U.S. government to prioritize the deportation of criminals and threats to our community and provide relief in pursuing the deportation of the vast majority of immigrants who are assets to our communities.

We want the President to do in fact what his Administration claims it is doing when it talks about immigration enforcement.

He must enforce the law, but so far, he has only been looking at one aspect of the law when it comes to immigration. We read in that leaked memo -- the Mayorkas memo -- that he has a great amount of leeway and prosecutorial discretion in how deportation policy is meted out and how resources are targeted in the government he runs. We are asking for balance and for consideration of immigrants with deep, long-term equities in this country and for temporary relief until we are able to get legislation passed and implemented.

So petitions to the President asking him to act -- at least -- to stop the deportations of the families of U.S. citizens, young people who should have been legalized via the DREAM Act, and stop the expansion of programs that weaken public safety and serve as a dragnet for law-abiding immigrants by enlisting state and local police in federal enforcement - that is what we are asking.

This is not Luis Gutierrez alone. Indeed, the call for action is coming from the grassroots in Chicago, in Boston, in North Carolina, in Texas, in California, in Colorado, and across the

country. We know that a process of legalization is what the American people want -- with strong support in the African-American community, the Asian and Pacific Islander community, across every demographic people reject the fantasy that we will drive 12 million men, women and children from our country and our economy and think there should be a way for immigrants to get legal and get in the system.

And it will not be me alone who travels to these events. Each will feature the testimonies of affected families and each will be an opportunity for Members of Congress, state and local officials, and the wider community to participate and make their voices heard. Standing with me are Members of Congress who have been the key allies working with me and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus on immigration, on the DREAM Act and on related matters. I want to give a few of them an opportunity to say why they are supporting this initiative and then we will take questions...

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